

Multilayer stack with compensated resonant circuit

The invention relates to a metallization structure in a multilayer stack comprising a number of dielectric layers that are arranged above and below a ground electrode.

In current electronic circuits, a very high integration density of electrical functions on a small volume or small area is desired. This is achieved for example in that functions are designed in a three-dimensional arrangement in a multilayer process. In the case of integrated electrical resonant circuits which are produced using planar technology, for example using multilayer laminate processes and Low Temperature Cofire Ceramic (LTCC) processes, capacitors and coils having metal structures are incorporated in the multilayer substrate. The integration of capacitors in such multilayer circuits is nevertheless only possible to a limited extent. This is because many multilayer processes exhibit fluctuations in the layer thickness, with the statistical fluctuation in layer thicknesses often being up to 10%, and since the capacitance of a plate capacitor changes as a function of the layer thickness of the dielectric layer between the electrodes an integrated capacitor would also fluctuate by 10% of its capacitance. This leads to corresponding fluctuations in the electrical response of the integrated functions, and the frequency of a filter designed with integrated coils and capacitors cannot be kept constant in accordance with the specifications. Nowadays, therefore, in multilayer stacks many components are still soldered onto the circuit as external components, with these being checked for their set value prior to assembly. The capacitors are sorted in terms of their capacitance and exhibit variations of typically less than 5%. These external components limit the miniaturization and entail higher costs on account of the assembly. In addition, the soldering process used for these external components in the assembly has a higher error rate than would be the case for integrated capacitors, and thus often leads to failure of the product.

An alternative solution would be to very carefully monitor the layer thicknesses during the process. However, this is only possible with a high level of complexity.

In some circuits, such as the high frequency circuit of a Bluetooth device for example, more than ten resonant circuits consisting of a capacitor and a coil are required. The

external components required for these circuits represent a considerable part of the overall number of external components. It would therefore be desirable to integrate these resonant circuits into a multilayer stack without the variations in layer thickness brought about by the process having a significant effect on the electrical response of the resonant circuit.

5 The circuit of Fig. 1(a) shows a grounded series resonant circuit, consisting of a coil L1 and a grounded capacitor C1. At the resonant frequency of the resonant circuit, a high frequency signal moving from point 1 to point 2 is reflected, since the resonant circuit at this frequency acts as a short circuit.

Fig. 1(b) shows the three-dimensional design of the resonant circuit.

10 Fig. 1(c) shows the transmission characteristic for a high frequency signal from point 1 to point 2 for layer thicknesses varying by 10%. The transmission characteristic changes; in particular the resonant frequency is shifted.

15 It is an object of the present invention to provide a metallization structure in a multilayer stack having a number of dielectric layers, which metallization structure makes it possible to integrate resonant circuits into the stack, with layer thickness fluctuations being compensated such that they do not or practically do not affect the electrical response of the resonant circuit.

This object is achieved by a metallization structure in a multilayer stack as claimed in claim 1. Advantageous refinements form the subject of the dependent claims.

20 Particularly configured multilayer stacks are defined in claims 4 to 10.

According to the invention, the metallization structure has a capacitor electrode and a line that acts as a coil, where the capacitor electrode and the line are arranged in a common plane which lies parallel to a ground electrode at a distance h_1 . The ratio of the width w of the line to h_1 is greater than 3.

25 According to a preferred refinement, a second ground electrode may be provided, the plane comprising capacitor electrode and line being arranged parallel to said second ground electrode at a distance h_2 , where the ratio of the width w of the line to h_2 is again greater than 3. The plane comprising capacitor electrode and line lies between the first and second ground electrodes.

30 According to the invention, in a multilayer stack having a metallization structure as defined above it is also provided that this metallization layer is arranged on a dielectric layer, the dielectric constant ϵ_{medium} of which is greater than the dielectric constant ϵ of the surrounding dielectric layers. "Surrounding layers" means the layers adjoining the layer having the dielectric constant ϵ_{medium} . It has been found that, in such an arrangement,

variations in the layer thickness of the dielectric layer having the dielectric constant ϵ_{medium} only very slightly affect the transmission characteristic or the shift in resonant frequency. If, specifically within the dielectric layer, the layer thickness decreases, the capacitance of the capacitor is increased. At the same time, the metal line is located closer to the ground

- 5 electrode. This line acts as a coil. At the ground electrode, mirror currents are induced which lower the inductance of the line. The closer the line is to the ground electrode, the lower the inductance of the line. The product of capacitance and inductance thus remains approximately constant and hence so does the resonant frequency

$$f = \frac{1}{2\pi\sqrt{L \cdot C}}$$

- 10 of the circuit. Inversely, when the layer thickness increases the capacitance of the capacitor becomes smaller, while the inductance of the line becomes greater. As a result the product $L \cdot C$ again remains approximately constant.

According to one preferred refinement, the following applies in respect of the dielectric constants

- 15 $\epsilon \leq \epsilon_{\text{medium}}$

The layer thickness of the dielectric layer having the dielectric constant ϵ_{medium} should preferably be selected such that

$$\frac{\epsilon_{\text{medium}} \cdot d_s}{\epsilon \cdot d_{\text{medium}}} > 5,$$

- so that the metallization structure that is next in the vertical direction is well decoupled. In
20 respect of the decoupling in the horizontal direction, the following should apply

$$\frac{\epsilon_{\text{medium}} \cdot d_{\text{min}}}{d_{\text{medium}} \cdot \epsilon} > 7,$$

where d_{min} is the minimum distance to the next metallization structure in the plane.

Besides dielectric layers, there may also be magnetic layers in the multilayer stack.

- 25 The multilayer stack according to the present invention may be produced in a multilayer laminate process and in particular in an LTCC process.

The invention finds application in electrical modules for implementing a filter function for high frequency signals.

The invention will be further described with reference to examples of embodiments shown in the drawings to which, however, the invention is not restricted.

Fig. 1(a) shows a diagram of a series resonant circuit.

Fig. 1(b) shows the three-dimensional design of the series resonant circuit of

5 Fig. 1(a).

Fig. 1(c) shows the transmission characteristic of the series resonant circuit of Fig. 1(a) in the case of variation of the thickness of the dielectric layer by $\pm 10\%$.

Fig. 2 shows a multilayer stack and metallization structure according to one example of embodiment of the present invention.

10 Fig. 3 shows a three-dimensional design of the metallization structure for making a resonant circuit.

Fig. 4 shows the transmission characteristic of the metallization structure in a multilayer stack according to the invention with variation of the thickness of the dielectric layer having the dielectric constant ϵ_{medium} by $\pm 10\%$.

15 Fig. 5(a) shows the design of the multilayer stack according to the invention with an additional ground electrode.

Fig. 5(b) shows the transmission characteristic of the multilayer stack of Fig. 5(a) in comparison with that of Fig. 3.

20 Fig. 6(a) shows a three-dimensional design of a series resonant circuit according to the prior art with additional ground electrode.

Fig. 6(b) shows the transmission characteristic without ground electrode (I) and with an additional ground electrode (II).

Fig. 7 shows an example of embodiment of a multilayer stack having a resonant circuit between two ground electrodes.

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Fig. 2 shows an example of embodiment of a multilayer stack according to the present invention, which is made up of a number of dielectric layers 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, where the dielectric layer 14 on a ground electrode 30 has a dielectric constant ϵ_{medium} which is greater, for example by a factor of 2, than the dielectric constants of the surrounding layers 12, 16. The thickness d_{medium} of the dielectric layer 14 is smaller than that of the surrounding dielectric layers 12, 16 and, in order to keep the interaction with surrounding structures low, the layer thickness d_{medium} should advantageously be small compared to the distances to adjacent structures, while ϵ_{medium} on the other hand should be as great as possible. It is thus

possible for capacitors having sufficiently small dimensions to be integrated. A metallization structure 20 is arranged at the interface between the dielectric layer 14 and the dielectric layer 12, said metallization structure being composed of a capacitor electrode 22 and a line 24 that partially surrounds the latter.

5 Fig. 3 shows the three-dimensional design of the series resonant circuit structure with supply lines.

The transmission of power in the circuit according to the invention is shown in Fig. 4. It can clearly be seen that variations in the layer thickness of the dielectric layer 14 lead only to a very slight change in the resonant frequency or in the overall filter curve.

10 The electrical response of the circuit according to the invention has great stability with respect to interaction with other metallizations which are located in the multilayer stack above and below the series resonant circuit. In the multilayer stack of Fig. 3, above the dielectric layer 12 there is no ground electrode above the metallization structure 20. Fig. 5(a) shows the design of this structure with an additional ground electrode 32 above 15 the metallization structure 20; Fig. 5(b) shows the transmission characteristic, where without a ground electrode (curve I) and at different distances of the additional ground electrode of 100 µm (curve II) and 200 µm (curve III) practically no variations in the resonant frequency can be seen. This effect is based on the high degree of coupling of the structure according to the invention to the ground electrode 30 arranged at a small distance and the advantageously 20 relatively high dielectric constant compared to that of the surrounding layers.

For comparison purposes, in Fig. 6(a) a resonant circuit with multilayer stack according to the prior art or as shown in Fig. 1(b) is likewise provided with a further ground electrode at a vertical distance of 100 µm above the circuit. The transmission characteristic II in Fig. 6(b) shows that the upper electrode leads to a considerable shift in the resonant 25 frequency compared to the arrangement without an additional ground electrode (curve I).

Fig. 7 shows a multilayer stack having two ground electrodes 30, 32, between which the metallization structure 20 is arranged, where between the metallization structure 20 and the ground electrodes 30 and 32 in each case dielectric layers 14 and 14', respectively, having increased dielectric constants compared to that of the surrounding layers 12, 16 are 30 provided. Otherwise, the multilayer stack corresponds essentially to that of Fig. 2.